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Identical letters dated 22 February 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the position of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) (S/2015/124):

1. A full year has passed since the Secretary-General began issuing monthly reports on humanitarian work in Syria. During that time, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has regularly provided confirmed information to the Secretariat. The Syrian Government therefore finds it deplorable that the report's authors have continued to politicize the issue, ignoring and indeed obscuring the facts and developments on the ground. The authors have used and re-used the same stereotypical language, which is aimed at blaming the Syrian Government for the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and for impeding the delivery of assistance. They have depended on sources that have been shown to lack credibility. At the same time, they turn a blind eye to the basic fact that the humanitarian crisis that has arisen in certain parts of Syria was caused and exacerbated by the acts of terrorism that armed terrorist groups have committed against the people and Government of Syria, particularly Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the Nusrah Front, the Free Army and other associates and offshoots of those groups and of the terrorist organization Al-Qaida.

2. Syria notes that the authors' treatment of the armed terrorist group' crimes and obstruction of humanitarian assistance has improved since previous reports. At the same time, Syria is surprised that in numerous places, such as paragraph 19, they persist in describing the terrorist organizations ISIL and the Nusrah Front as armed opposition groups. There are only two possible explanations. One is that the Secretariat's understanding of the groups' nature is different from, and incompatible with, the resolutions of the Security Council, particularly resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015). The other is that the authors do not read what they write, limiting themselves instead to copying and pasting from one report to the next. In either case, they are undermining the credibility of the reports, and hence of the United Nations as a whole. Moreover, the term "armed opposition" is not used in international relations and norms. The latter recognize the presence of political *opposition movements that build and do not destroy. However, when individuals* and gangs take up weapons outside the scope of the State, attack civilians and

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undermine social peace and security, they must be called by their true name, which is set out in all of the relevant legislation; the appropriate terms are "terrorist" and "armed terrorist groups".

3. Since the outset of the crisis, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has done its utmost, without discrimination, to protect its citizens from terrorism and effectively meet the essential needs of civilians who have been affected by the crisis across the country. It has worked to provide basic services and repair the infrastructure that has been deliberately damaged by the armed terrorist groups, which have cut off or destroyed water and electricity networks. The facts on the ground bear out this analysis, whereas the Secretariat attempts to reach or imply the opposite conclusion, namely that the Government is failing to protect its citizens. Paragraph 56 contains some dubious and misleading statements concerning the way to tackle the humanitarian crisis in Syria. In particular, the authors fail to refer to the necessity and importance of combating terrorism, or to the need to take swift and specific measures against those States within and beyond the region that support the armed terrorist groups.

Annex I sets out some incidents and crimes committed by armed terrorist groups during the month of January 2015. During the period from 21 December 2014 to 23 January 2015, official statistics show that terrorist mortar attacks across the country claimed a total of 144 civilian deaths, including 26 children, and 237 injuries, including 48 children.

4. The Syrian Government reiterates that, in addressing the humanitarian situation in Syria, the United Nations must take on board a new, realistic approach, recognizing that combating and eliminating terrorism would mean the beginning of the end of Syrian citizens' suffering. The basic fact is that the humanitarian needs arose in the areas penetrated by armed terrorist groups. That point is borne out by numerous examples that have been observed by, and are well known to, the United Nations country team in Syria.

5. The Syrian Government believes that by minimizing the threat posed by the criminal methods of the armed terrorist groups, and by refraining from calling those methods by their true name, the Secretariat is not helping to tackle the humanitarian crisis. In particular, the armed terrorist groups have prevented humanitarian assistance from reaching affected Syrian civilians in their areas of activity. On other occasions, they have appropriated the supplies for their own men or sold them to civilians at exorbitant prices. In Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqah and Aleppo, they have affixed their labels and emblems to the crates in order to give the impression that they are the aid providers. The authors of the report have ignored the repercussions of those actions.

6. It is now clear to all and sundry that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has been working to deliver and facilitate humanitarian assistance. The United Nations should recognize that, were it not for the Government's efforts, and its direct cooperation and coordination with the specialized organizations and agencies of the United Nations, and the Government's protection of United Nations staff members and convoys, and the thousands of volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the United Nations would not have been able to deliver humanitarian assistance and relief to millions in Syria over the last few years. The documents are the clearest indicator of the humanitarian work that has been done in Syria. For instance, according to United Nations organizations, 3.4 million beneficiaries

received food supplies and some 345,000 received medical supplies in January 2015 via the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. The facts on the ground continue demonstrate that cross-border humanitarian assistance delivery does not serve the purported objectives of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). That is evidenced by the fact that assistance was not delivered across the borders to the hardest-hit areas of Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr. The United Nations instead focused on delivering assistance to other areas in Idlib, Dar'a, Aleppo, Hama and Ladhiqiyah, although it was possible to reach those areas from inside Syrian territory. That decision was made for well-known political reasons. The United Nations must therefore focus on delivering various forms of humanitarian assistance and relief from inside Syrian territory, in complete cooperation and coordination with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in order to ensure that the assistance reaches the affected civilians who need it.

7. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that a sound, realistic approach to the humanitarian issue would require the following fundamental points, which we have set out in detail in our previous replies:

- Serious efforts must be made to address the primary cause of the humanitarian crisis that has developed in many parts of Syria, namely, the crimes that have been committed from the outset of the Syrian crisis by armed terrorist groups, including some Al-Qaida associates, which enjoy regional and international support. What is needed now is complete cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government with regard to counter-terrorism. Support for and funding and encouragement of terrorism must be halted, and the financing of terrorism must be suppressed. The cross-border flow of foreign terrorists into Syria must also be halted, in accordance with Security Council resolutions.

- It is necessary to end immediately the coercive and illegal unilateral measures taken by certain countries against the Syrian people. Those measures have had a direct impact on the standard of living of Syrian civilians.

- The United Nations must strengthen its cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government in order to ensure that such assistance is effective and reaches its rightful civilian recipients in all regions of Syria without discrimination. Aid must not find its way to terrorist groups or be handed over to them, as has happened on numerous occasions. The United Nations must cooperate and coordinate fully with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the Organization's primary partner for such work throughout Syria.

- It is important, indeed, necessary, that the Secretariat's policies should accord with the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations resolutions, the provisions governing humanitarian work, General Assembly resolution 46/182 and Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015) concerning counter-terrorism.

- The problem of the funding shortfall, which was one of the main obstacles to the implementation of the 2014 humanitarian response plan, must be addressed. As of November 2014, only 39 per cent of the funding required for the plan had been secured.

- United Nations officials must stop making statements and issuing reports that, for political motives, contain misleading estimates and inaccurate and

undocumented figures on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Such conduct adversely affects the credibility and precision of humanitarian work, including the report under discussion. The report cites unreliable testimony and reports coming from parties hostile to Syria and to the Syrian people, including the reports of the international commission of inquiry for Syria, which are characterized by politicization, lack of objectivity, hostility and reliance on information provided by armed terrorist groups that have become experts in slaughter and destruction.

8. As regards the delivery of assistance across borders with neighbouring States, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic wishes to reiterate the following points:

- The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs must provide detailed tables of the supplies and assistance being brought across the border into various parts of Syria, including the parties to which it delivered supplies, the criteria used to assess needs in areas where it has been proposed that aid should be distributed, the numbers of beneficiaries and the distribution mechanism employed. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent must be a fundamental partner in the delivery of cross-border assistance. Moreover, the Syrian Government has continued to ask the Resident Coordinator for a list of United Nations partners in the context of implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. It is still awaiting a response.

- In order to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2170 (2014), 2178 (2014) and 2199 (2015), the United Nations needs an effective mechanism for verifying that humanitarian assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries in areas in which armed terrorist groups are present. It is not enough to monitor the arrival of shipments at border points from the other side of the border; the shipments are then turned over to unidentified o dubious affiliation. The Syrian Government has warned the United Nations side that certain regional parties have been using Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) and the delivery of assistance as a pretext to support the armed terrorist groups, using the same crossings and roads as United Nations actors. Such actions genuinely endanger humanitarian work.

- Turkey must stop using non-official border crossings to bring weapons and instruments of death into Syria and to smuggle terrorists into the country. Saudi Arabia must stop using the Syria-Jordan border crossings used by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to bring in weapons and aid destined for the Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups. The United Nations has a moral and political responsibility to prevent that from happening.

- The Secretariat must refrain from attempting to give a veneer of legitimacy to the illegal work of non-governmental organizations that are operating under spurious humanitarian pretexts in certain border areas in the north and south of the country. That approach sets a dangerous precedent with negative implications for the credibility of humanitarian work carried out under the aegis of the United Nations.

9. Despite the flagrant and contrived politicization of the humanitarian effort, the Syrian Government, in cooperation with Syrian Arab Red Crescent, continues to

facilitate the efforts of the United Nations and other international organizations to access many hard-to-reach areas, including hotspots in Rif Dimashq, Homs, Aleppo and Idlib governorates. This is in addition to the assistance being delivered to hotspots by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Annex II lists examples of humanitarian assistance that was delivered to several hard-to-reach areas and hotspots. That assistance was delivered thanks to the facilitation provided by the Syrian Government in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

10. For political reasons that are now clear, the authors of the report claim that the Government is besieging given areas in certain parts of the country and denying access to humanitarian assistance. The Syrian Government rejects that allegation, which is contrary to the truth. If weapons and instruments of death are reaching those areas, where the armed terrorist groups — which the report insists on calling "armed opposition groups" — are present, how can they be said to be besieged? It should also be noted that those areas are being used to launch indiscriminate rocket attacks against peaceful areas of Damascus, Aleppo and Homs. During the period covered by the report, the operations of armed terrorist groups in those areas have caused dozens of civilian deaths and injuries.

- For instance, Yarmouk camp continues to be besieged from within by the armed terrorist groups. Those groups are the ones that prevent humanitarian workers from accessing aid distribution points and open fire on civilians and rescue teams. For 29 days, in January 2015, that situation prevented the delivery of assistance to the camp from outside. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic is surprised that Secretariat officials failed to express any condemnation during that period.

- The same applies to the villages in the eastern Ghutah. The armed terrorist groups are preventing civilians from leaving those areas, and are using them as human shields while appropriating the humanitarian assistance that they receive. The Syrian Government has made every possible effort to evacuate civilians from those areas. 9,000 civilians, mostly women and children, have been rescued from the eastern Ghutah, including Duma. They were fleeing the savage treatment meted out by the armed terrorist groups, treatment that is described in paragraph 10 of the report. They sought refuge with the Government, which has welcomed them and provided the assistance, basic services and medical care that they need.

- It is surprising that the United Nations side persists in requesting the delivery of humanitarian assistance to such areas as Duma. The United Nations made such a request on 5 February 2015; yet on 4 and 5 February, it asked its staff members to stay at home because armed terrorist groups in Duma had threatened a missile attack on Damascus.

11. The Syrian Government reiterates that it holds the United Nations side responsible for any negative impact on the agricultural sector, the environment and the biosphere that may be caused by the illegal introduction since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) of agricultural or animal produce. The United Nations Resident Coordinator in Syria has been informed that certain genetically modified agricultural substances and seeds have been found in Aleppo

and Idlib governorates. They originated in the Israeli entity and had been shipped to Turkey, where they were repackaged as Turkish produce.

12. The Syrian Government rejects the claims made in the Secretary-General's report that the Syrian armed forces are indiscriminately targeting civilians. The Syrian Arab Army is carrying out its constitutional and moral duty to protect Syrian citizens from armed terrorist groups and prevent these groups from committing crimes against Syrians wherever they may be, and from targeting humanitarian assistance convoys. It is particularly telling that the people who have been forcibly displaced from their homes head for areas that are protected by the Syrian Arab Army. At the same time, the Syrian Government is earnestly striving to reach a political solution and bring about national reconciliation, which is Syria's national strategy. At the Geneva conference, Syria emphasized the importance of prioritizing counter-terrorism and bringing about national reconciliation, with a view to arriving at a political solution among Syrians and under Syrian leadership.

13. Syria continues to emphasize its readiness to cooperate at the international and regional level in countering terrorism through an international or regional alliance that would be established under the auspices of the United Nations. It is also prepared to engage in bilateral cooperation to that end and supports any international effort aimed at countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, provided that, in doing so, every effort is made to safeguard civilian lives, respect national sovereignty and adhere to international instruments. Syria has repeatedly stressed that States that sponsor terrorism in Syria should learn from previous events and experiences. They should understand that the threat engendered by terrorism will spread beyond Syria and the region to engulf every country in the world, particularly those that embrace, support and fund terrorism. The recent acts of terrorism in France and elsewhere confirm the soundness of Syria's position.

14. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms its position that the crisis in Syria requires a peaceful, political solution based on dialogue among Syrians under Syrian leadership. It calls on the international community to support those efforts, including the preliminary consultations that took place in Moscow from 26 to 29 January 2015, in which the Syrian Government and representatives of the opposition movements took part. It calls on State sponsors of terrorism and armed terrorist groups, particularly Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey and France, immediately to stop supporting, funding, training and harbouring such groups. The terrorists are not a danger to Syria alone: their blind rage will spread like wildfire across the world.

15. Notwithstanding the points made above, and the politicization of humanitarian work in Syria that is evident in numerous misleading and politicized reports and statements, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic will continue to cooperate with the United Nations. Working together with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, it will facilitate the efforts of United Nations humanitarian agencies and other international organizations in order to reach all of the civilians affected by the crimes of armed terrorist groups across the country, including hard-to-reach areas. It will do so in accordance with its constitutional responsibilities towards its citizens and in keeping with its consistent position that the humanitarian situation and its implications are matters of priority. In order to ensure that the aid reaches its rightful beneficiaries, it is essential that national and international efforts complement one another. The Syrian Government continues to bear most of the

burden of the humanitarian response effort, particularly in view of the funding shortfall that has been one of the most significant obstacles to the implementation of the 2014 humanitarian response plan and to the efforts made in January and February 2015.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Crimes committed by ISIL, the Nusrah Front, the Free Army, the Army of Islam and other armed terrorist groups

- On 22 January 2015, a shell landed on the Zahrawi Hospital in the Abbasiyin district of Damascus. The building was damaged but nobody was injured.
- 24 January 2015, armed terrorist groups launched mortar shells and missiles at the villages of Qurmus and Maryamayn in Hama governorate. One woman was killed and five civilians were wounded by shrapnel.
- On 24 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired over 70 shells at the town centre of Busra, in Dar'a governorate. Three civilians were killed and others were wounded by shrapnel.
- On 25 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired over forty 107-mm missiles and mortar shells at various areas of Damascus. Six civilians were killed; 53 others, including children, were wounded; and public and private property was damaged.
- On 25 January 2015, armed terrorist groups shot at cars on the Damascus-Zabadani road, killing a civilian woman and injuring three others.
- On 25 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired mortar shells and gas canisters at the Khalidiyah and Ashrafiyah quarters of Aleppo, killing three civilians and injuring 18 others.
- On 26 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired missiles at Ladhiqiyah city, killing five civilians and injuring 19 others.
- On 27 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired mortar shells and missiles at various areas of Damascus, killing a woman and a girl and injuring another woman.
- On 28 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired a mortar shell that landed on the Russian Consulate in Damascus, causing material damage.
- On 29 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired over 200 mortar shells, gas canisters and artisanal missiles at the town of Ariha in Idlib governorate, killing a civilian and injuring 17 others.
- On 30 January 2015, armed terrorist groups detonated an explosive device while a public bus was passing in the Taym area of Dayr al-Zawr governorate, killing a civilian and injuring another.
- On 31 January 2015, armed terrorist groups fired two Grad missiles at the town of Salamiyah, in Homs governorate, injuring six civilians.
- On 1 February 2015, armed terrorist groups detonated an explosive device on a bus in Damascus governorate, killing six civilians and injuring over 23 others.
- On 1 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired mortar shells at the areas of Masakin al-Sabil, Shahba' and Hamdaniyah in Aleppo governorate, injuring 11 civilians.
- On 2 February 2015, an armed terrorist group abducted a civilian along with his car on the Damascus-Suwayda' road.

- On 3 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired a missile that landed in front of the American School in Damascus, injuring a number of civilians.
- On 3 February 2015, armed terrorist groups in Duma gardens directed sniper fire at a camp for internally displaced persons, killing a child.
- On 3 February 2015, armed terrorist groups abducted Sheikh Muhammad Khayr Munir al-Tarshan, the deputy director of the Islamic Fath Institute and deputy Mufti of Damascus.
- On 3 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired mortar shells at the village of Na'ur Shathah in Hama governorate. A child was wounded by shrapnel.
- On 4 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired a mortar shell and a gas canister at the Talal area of Aleppo, injuring five civilians.
- On 5 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired 115 missiles and mortar shells at various areas of Damascus, killing six civilians and injuring 35 others.
- On 9 February 2015, armed terrorist groups fired 200 mortar shells, gas canisters and artisanal missiles at the village of Fu'ah, in Hama governorate, killing five civilians and injuring 19 others.

Annex II

Examples of humanitarian assistance that the United Nations and international organizations, acting in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, were able to deliver thanks to the facilitation of the Syrian Government, and assistance that was provided by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent

- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent distributed humanitarian aid provided by United Nations organizations operating in Syria, comprising food and non-food aid and medical assistance, to all governorates except Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr but including Hasakah, Aleppo, Dar'a, Idlib and Hama. A total of 283,897 food parcels were delivered, including 29,276 food parcels to Hama and its countryside, 11,201 parcels to Idlib and its countryside (Saraqib, Ariha, Jisr al-Shughur, Kafrayya, Fu'ah and Mathanah), 22,128 parcels to Dar'a and its countryside, and 50,486 parcels to Aleppo and its countryside.
- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent distributed humanitarian aid provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Syria to most governorates, including Idlib and Hama. A total of 53,590 food parcels were distributed. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent also distributed 14,834 food parcels provided by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to Hama, Homs and Aleppo governorates.
- The Syrian Arab Red Crescent distributed humanitarian aid, comprising food and non-food aid and medical assistance provided by foreign non-governmental organizations operating in Syria; a total of 36,514 food parcels were distributed in Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Aleppo, Dar'a and Ladhiqiyah governorates, and 30,943 parcels of medical assistance were distributed in a number of governorates, including Dar'a, Hama and Rif Dimashq.
- In January, gun and sniper fire by the armed terrorist groups besieging the Yarmouk camp continued to make it impossible to bring humanitarian aid to the civilians inside the camp. The terrorists killed several civilians who were attempting to deliver that aid. The deputy representative of UNRWA, the representative of the Palestine Liberation Organization and others witnessed those crimes being committed.
- In January, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, in cooperation with ICRC, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and foreign non-governmental organizations, was able to meet the urgent needs of several thousand affected Syrians who had been taken out of the Duma area, which is under the control of armed terrorist groups.
- In January 2015, the World Food Programme (WFP) distributed food aid to some 3.4 million persons.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) was able to deliver medical assistance to approximately 345,000 persons, including those in hard-to-reach areas and hotspots in Rif Dimashq (Duma) and Homs and its countryside.
- From 25 December 2014 to 24 January 2015, the Ministry of Health approved requests from international organizations for the delivery of medical assistance

(medicines, vaccines, medical supplies and equipment). WHO, UNICEF, ICRC, UNRWA, the United Nations Population Fund and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent worked together to deliver 112 shipments to most Syrian governorates, including hard-to-reach areas in Rif Dimashq (Duma), the Dar'a countryside, Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Hasakah.

- We reiterate that the experience of the United Nations in transporting humanitarian assistance to Mu'addamiyah and what the Organization witnessed inside the city confirm that it is not under siege, and that the 4,000 civilians remaining in the Darayya area have been able to reach Mu'addamiyah. That is contrary to what the Secretariat's reports insist on alleging about Mu'addamiyah and Darayya, including the report under consideration, something that casts doubt on its credibility.

- The Syrian Government renewed its approval for WFP to bring humanitarian assistance through the Nusaybin crossing on the Syrian-Turkish border, in order to allow 46,000 food parcels to be brought into Hasakah governorate in January 2015.